



TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS

Prince George's County, Maryland

Incorporated in 1896 ~ Sixth Oldest Municipality in PG County

WORKSESSION MINUTES JULY 15, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Calvo, Mayor Pro Tem (MPT) Wilkinson, Councilmembers (CM) Almoguera, Dennison and Eddy. Also present were Town Administrator (TA) Murphy, Clerk Harper and Green Team members Anita Cardwell, Therese Forbes; Kristen Larson, Christopher Mann and Trinity Tomsic.

1. MAYOR

Announcements: Longtime resident Peggy Smith, wife of Ray Smith, passed away on July 13. Peggy and Ray raised their children in Berwyn Heights and have active participants in the community.

Calendar: The Pop's Park grand reopening was set for September 7. The Lake Artemesia concert was moved to October 5.

Minutes: On a motion by MPT Wilkinson and second by CM Dennison, the June 17 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0. On a motion by MPT Wilkinson and second by CM Dennison, the July 1 worksession minutes were approved 5 to 0.

Department reports: CM Kulpa-Eddy sought clarification as to whether a new application for Highway User Revenues (HUR) has been submitted. TA Murphy said she has submitted it. MPT Wilkinson reported that the Safe Routes to School grant announcements were postponed to the end of July. In response to Mayor Calvo, he said that the sidewalks through the Greenbelt bus depot were put out to bid in the spring and would be constructed during the summer. He will check on where the plans stand. CM Almoguera said that the Town office has new desks. CM Dennison announced that school will be back in session on August 19. Hello Huskies Night will be on August 27.

Mayor Calvo reported that Chief Antolik is on vacation. In his absence, Sergeant Moroney will be in charge. There was a police incident at the Berwyn Heights McDonald's in which one person threatened another with a knife. Later it was determined that the two people knew each other and had a quarrel. An Osage resident accidentally backed up over a can of paint, which spilled into the street. He cleaned the spill up as best he could by water blasting it. Mayor Calvo said this is an issue that would be covered under the Roads and Rights-of-Way Ordinance, which the Council is working on revising. Lastly, the grass around the basketball and tennis courts on the school property is very high. Mayor Calvo thought the school system should return this property to the Town so they can plant ground cover that does not require frequent cutting. MPT Wilkinson commented that Assistant Principal Cropper knows the person to talk to about getting the grass cut.

Citizen comments: Mayor Calvo spoke with a tenant, who has a problem with a mold issue. The tenant plans to move out as the landlord has agreed to let her stay on the lease. MPT Wilkinson received comments about a recent mosquito spraying in Berwyn Heights. The spraying occurred in the day time, whereas it is supposed to be done at night. Residents can opt out of having their yard sprayed. MPT Wilkinson also received a question about whether the Town knows anything about the plans to develop the University of Maryland golf course. He asked to add it as a Four Cities agenda item.

Green Team presentation: Mayor Calvo welcomed the members of the Green Team. Current members include Trinity Tomsic, Christopher Mann, Anita Cardwell and Therese Forbes. Kristin Larson attended recent meetings and is interested in becoming a member.

Christopher Mann gave a summary of the Green Team's accomplishments since it began to meet in December 2012. He said that the Green Team's mission is to make Berwyn Heights a more environmentally friendly community while obtaining Sustainable Maryland certification (SMC). Becoming certified is free and not difficult and can take several years of effort. The Team has registered on the SMC website, where it selected its areas of interest from a menu of options. Residents can follow the Green Team's progress toward completing the requirements on the SMC website and on Berwyn Heights Green Team's Facebook page.

The Green Team fulfilled two of the main requirements of the SMC program with the establishment of a Green Team and the completion of a community survey. Survey results showed that residents' top environmental concerns are a lack of locally grown food, obesity, litter and invasive species. It also showed widespread support for decreasing energy usage; compiling a local business directory, setting up a farmers market; establishing a community garden; and improving stewardship of the Anacostia watershed. These will be the areas on which the Green Team will focus.

Anita Cardwell gave an overview of the SMC program. The SMC program has 8 categories of sustainable actions from which communities can choose the ones most suitable. The Green Team chose community gardens and municipal energy audits as priority items, based on the interests expressed in the survey and on what the Town has already done. Development of a watershed plan may become another focus of activity. Completion of an SMC action item earns between 5 and 20 points. Certification requires 150 points. Berwyn Heights has already completed a number of eligible actions in the areas of energy saving technologies, recycling, and gardening that are worth half the points needed toward certification.

Therese Forbes elaborated on Green Team accomplishments. The Green Team has joined forces with the Berwyn Heights Elementary School (BHES) Green Team to maintain green school certification. This year, the school started a rain barrel and composting training programs as part of the green schools initiative. Other accomplishments include completion of SMC training by Mayor Calvo, Acting Director of Public Works Lockley and Green Team facilitator Trinity Tomsic; setting up a Green Team Facebook page and publishing the Green Bee newsletter; advertising of local farmers markets; and setting up recycling bins for CFL light bulb recycling at the Town office and at the school. The Town has completed municipal energy audits, and installed energy efficient lighting throughout Town buildings. The Town also started to implement a waste reduction program by educating residents about recycling and enforcing egregious violations of trash disposal rules. Finally, the Town has plans to raise awareness about pet waste disposal and install pet waste stations.

Trinity Tomsic reviewed action items that require input from the Town Council, either in the form of feedback, staff or financial resources, or policy initiative. She noted, a community garden was chosen as a Green Team priority item, and the Green Team has set up a planning committee of 8 people to explore its feasibility. Setting up a community garden will require capital, staff and program resources from the Town. The garden will likely be located on Town property and needs access to water, as well as a fence to ward off deer. In addition, rules and regulations on the use of the gardens will need to be adopted that may require Town Council action. Other SMC action items requiring the Town's help include:

- Signage to promote local farmers markets - capital investment;
- Stricter enforcement of recycling - program and staff resources;
- Pet waste stations at parks - capital investment and program support;
- Making community events more environmentally friendly - program support;
- Local purchasing preference policy - new policy;
- Promoting local business directory - program support;
- Reducing illegal dumping and discharge - capital investment, program and staff resources;
- Watershed pollution prevention - capital investment, program and staff resources.

Mayor Calvo thanked the Green Team for their presentation. Regarding the items requiring Council involvement, establishment of a community garden is the important because it is mandatory for SMC certification in the chosen priority area. It poses the difficult problem of finding land with easy access to water. Ms. T said that the planning committee, as the first step, will ask the Public Works Department for a list of available sites and evaluate them. A site that is centrally located is preferred because it tends to generate more involvement. Most community gardens do not have access to running water and instead set up water barrels that are filled by a water delivery truck as needed. The amount of water needed depends on the number and size of individual plots in the garden. A small garden could consist of 20 plots and later add others. The Green Team hopes to have a garden up and running by spring or fall 2014.

Mayor Calvo said that signs to advertise farmers markets could be most easily posted at the intersection of Pontiac Street and Kenilworth Avenue. He would like to consider this sign in conjunction with other signs the Council has considered installing to announce community events and other news. Regarding the improvement of recycling participation, the Town has taken several steps in that direction. It has made recycling mandatory with the adoption of a new refuse ordinance, published brochures to educate residents about recycling, and adopted an inter-departmental program to monitor violations. However, the Town could definitely use more outreach to reach violators to effect better compliance. Increasing the share of recycled materials over regular trash has potentially the largest financial payoff and could be one of many of the sustainable actions the Green Team is proposing.

CM Kulpa-Eddy commented that recycling education could be improved with more frequent mailing of a recycling flyer and a focus on rentals, which have a high turnover and tend to produce the most trash. Ms. Tomsic said that a redesign of the recycling brochure may help. To reach those who do not speak much English, a brochure with pictures of what can be recycled may work better. MPT Wilkinson said that the electronics recycling program, including the new drop-off for CFLs and batteries, could use more publicity. Ms. Tomsic replied that the Green Team plans to have tables at future community events to help educate residents about environmentally friendly practices.

Mayor Calvo continued that the Town would support pet waste stations but needs a plan of where they would go. To draw up a plan it would be useful to have a map of the locations of existing trash cans around town. Pet waste stations could be put up where they are most needed and where there is a lack of trash cans. Ms. Forbes said that pet waste stations are typically placed at parks and other preferred dog walking destinations. Pet waste should not necessarily be placed in regular trash cans, especially if they are in front of people's homes or at bus stops.

Mayor Calvo said the Town could use guidance on making community events more environmentally friendly. It already has a ban on styrofoam cups and plate plastic is still widely used. Ms. Tomsic said that the Green Team could provide a checklist of products and procedures to help with events.

Mayor Calvo said he finds local purchasing policies more problematic. Currently, the Town policy is to get the best price for a product or service regardless of whether the vendor is local or not. He can't see the Town paying 5% more for a police car to purchase it from a local dealer. CM Kulpa-Eddy said she would want to know how 'local business' is defined. For example, is Staples considered a local business? Ms. Tomsic said that other municipalities have adopted local purchasing policies with the disclaimer that they apply only when practical. A thoughtful policy would also define what a local business is.

Mayor Calvo said a local business directory is a good idea. The Town maintains a list of Berwyn Heights businesses for licensing purposes, which could be used to compile the directory. He asked if the directory would be web based or a paper product. Ms. Forbes said that, at the outset, the directory is in electronic format and limited to in-Town businesses. Publication of a paper version of the directory depends on finding funds to print it. But the project is not yet at that stage. MPT Wilkinson said that updating a business directory will be a continuous effort. Therefore, a web-based directory should be the primary focus. Paper versions could be printed as needed.

Mayor Calvo suggested that a business directory could also highlight businesses that recycle to encourage other businesses to do so. CM Dennison thought businesses should be informed beforehand if this was done. Care should be taken not to embarrass businesses that do not recycle. Mayor Calvo said that the Town could inform businesses about it in its annual business license renewal letter. Further, businesses could be invited to opt into the Town's recycling program for free. Ms. Tomsic said that the Green Team could reach out to the business community as part of its education program on energy saving, tax credits and recycling.

Mayor Calvo said that there are a few homes in Town that discharge waste water from washing machines into the storm sewers. The Town can and should act to stop what is a violation of county code through its rental inspection program. TA Murphy said it is also a violation of the Town's Refuse Ordinance, and can be cited by the Town's Code Compliance Department. Ms. Tomsic suggested that the Town come up with a procedure to handle this problem and who to report it to.

Regarding stewardship of the Anacostia watershed, CM Almoguera said that she has many ideas on storm water mitigation best practices after hearing an interesting presentation on urban environmentalism at the recent MML conference. There is ample grant funding available for these types of projects through the Chesapeake Trust. In addition, a portion of the new \$62 /year "rain" tax that will be levied on home owners this year will be available for rebates to owners who install a rain barrel or do other storm water mitigation projects. Ms. Forbes added that the Chesapeake Bay Trust also funds some educational programs for K - 12 students that school's green team plans to take advantage of. Ms. Tomsic invited CM Almoguera to a Green Team meeting to discuss this topic in more depth. MPT Wilkinson said that Girl Scout troops and high school students looking for community service hours could be engaged in these types of projects, too.

In response to Mayor Calvo, Kristen Larson said she would like to be formally appointed to the Green Team. CM Dennison so moved and MPT Wilkinson seconded the motion passed 5 to 0.

At 8:55 p.m., the Council took a 10 minute break.

Sidewalks design & engineering: TA Murphy said that CP Johnson Associates is working on a proposal for improving storm water management at the Public Works yard and along Ballew Avenue. He expects to meet with CP Johnson next week to review the proposal. Then the Town and its engineers will begin negotiations with Prince George's County to obtain permits to build new sidewalks. Approval will hinge on the issue of coming up with an acceptable plan to offset increased storm runoff generated by the newly paved surfaces.

Emergency generators: TA Murphy said that he found and met with an electrical engineering firm, National Consulting Engineers, which has experience with installing backup generators. They evaluated the site and recommended that the generator for the Town office be installed on the north side of the building outside the bathrooms. The larger Town Center generator was proposed to be installed in the back, next to the existing AC unit. Transfer boxes for the generators would probably need to be mounted on the outside walls due to a lack of space inside the buildings. The generators should also be enclosed to meet sound regulations. The estimated cost will be \$130,000, plus an engineering fee of \$16,000. Once specifications have been obtained, the project can be put out to bid, which may generate a more expensive proposal.

TA Murphy continued that tomorrow he will meet with a representative from Dow Solar, an engineering firm that has designed a number of solar installations in Loudoun County. One of the things to be discussed is how solar panels on the Town Office roof would be integrated with the rest of the electrical system. He will report more to the next meeting. TA Murphy asked if the Council would like to get estimates from other engineering firms.

Mayor Calvo said he is not comfortable with only one estimate and would like to get others. He also recalled discussing that the Town office building only needs a backup to run the IT systems, but not the AC. The Town Center was to be the main emergency center. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that other references for electrical contractors in this field can be provided by Mike Attick, who has a contact in Crofton, and the towns of Upper Marlboro and Rising Sun which have recently installed backup generators. CM Almoguera also had a reference.

TA Murphy said that he will get other estimates. Once the bid specifications are in hand, he will send in the bond bill grant application.

63rd Avenue school zone: Mayor Calvo said that the designation of a school zone in the 8600 block of 63rd Avenue will require sending out notices to residents in the block radius and holding a public hearing. He asked if the Council wants to include other possible school zones as part of this approval process. He recalled that the Council discussed making the rest of 63rd Avenue and Tecumseh Street a school zone. MPT Wilkinson said that he thinks the 8600 and the 8900 blocks of 63rd Avenue are a priority. CM Kulpa-Eddy said that the criterion used to make all of 63rd Avenue a school zone could be applied to virtually all streets in Berwyn Heights, but is not practical.

The Council agreed that the 8900 block of 63rd Avenue is the most dangerous block for students walking to Greenbelt Middle School and should be a school zone. The 8600 block of 63rd Avenue would complete the project of making all streets bordering school property a school zone. No other zones were proposed. TA Murphy instructed to do an all Town mailing to notice residents. The hearing and school zone designation was scheduled for the September Town meeting.

Four Cities agenda: The University of Maryland golf course development was added to the agenda.

Nothing was discussed under **2. Code Compliance.**

3. PARKS AND RECREATION

Pop's Park site preparation: TA Murphy informed that engineers, CP Johnson & Associates, and contractor, NZI Construction, inspected the site to stake out areas to be graded. The playground equipment requires a grade of no more than 2%, while the installation of sidewalks along the west side of the park requires a grade of no more than 8%. It was determined that a site plan is needed, as well as "cut sheets" for the removal of the dirt. This will raise the cost of site preparation to approximately \$6,600.

CM Almoguera said that, initially, all site preparation was to be done by Public Works at an estimated cost of \$2,000. However, the grading issues necessitated it by including sidewalks in the planning, made it necessary to draw up a site plan and to hire a contractor. Moving the fence further into the park to make room for sidewalks will cost an additional \$10,000 that was not budgeted. However, this cost would be incurred anyway, when sidewalks are constructed. No cost estimate for replacing the sign and adding landscaping have been provided because there will be very little room to add plants when the fence has been moved. Replacement of the sign was not part of the original plan, and CM Almoguera has no proposal for it.

TA Murphy noted that CP Johnson initially proposed the sidewalks to be 6' back from the street so that a green strip could be included between curb and sidewalk. However, now it is recommended that the sidewalks be constructed next to the roadway to make grading easier and to protect tree roots. Mayor Calvo suggested a green strip of 3' might work better and would look nicer than a sidewalk adjacent to the curb. As for signage, he thinks the Town should have 2 signs in Town to announce events. One could be at Pop's Park. The money for it would come from a different budget. Councilmembers are encouraged to get input from residents where signs should be placed.

Mayor Calvo said that he is comfortable with spending additional money on Pop's Park improvements. However, he prefers to do so with mid-year budget amendments. There were no objections.

Nothing was discussed under **4. Public Safety and 5. Public Works.**

6. ADMINISTRATION

Performance evaluations: TA Murphy said that he has sent the performance evaluation guidelines to the department directors. There have been no changes to the guidelines. The evaluations must be turned in by August 16. Mayor Calvo added that the process should have been started earlier. Department heads will get to review the evaluations after the directors have submitted them. Department heads must take the directors' employee evaluations into account as a factor in rating performance.

Town Center meeting room: TA Murphy informed that the transformation of the former media center into a meeting room is complete. However, furniture has not yet been put back, nor have computers been installed. Mayor Calvo said that the Council had agreed to put the old conference table into the room. The old chairs from the Council chamber could also be moved over there, while new guest chairs should be purchased for the chamber. Town organizations that would use the room will be asked what should be done about its arrangement and furnishing. TA Murphy was asked to draw up a plan for the room, including a key protocol, which the Council would review and finalize.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Signed: Kerstin Harper, Town Clerk

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